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LOW IMPACT CARDIOVASCULAR TRAINING

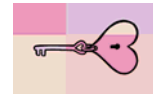
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When trying to reach peak health and fitness, no sound exercise program can be entirely effective without a cardiovascular element. Running, jogging, handball and full court basketball all are great cardiovascular work-outs. But how appropriate are they for the de-conditioned, those with physical issues or for a lifetime fitness program? As we age or as we are trying to build cardiovascular endurance, it is important to understand our limitations. It is a complete myth that you need to do high intensity activities like running to achieve improved fitness levels. You also do not need to push yourself until you are breathless. You do however need to move and increase activity levels. Simply speaking, low-impact cardiovascular training is probably the best choice for the mature population and for lifetime fitness.

The key in benefiting from this type of training is to gradually increase your level of intensity while choosing a form that you enjoy doing. If you enjoy it, you will do it every day. Making it part of your lifestyle will insure success and more health and fitness benefits.



This again raises the question how much and how often? There are several schools of thought in this area. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends 10-30 minutes 3-4 days per week for the de-conditioned or beginners. They also recommend 3-5 days per week 20-60 minutes per session for the more advanced. Just this year the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced their new dietary and exercise recommendations. They advocated 30 minutes per day for chronic disease prevention, 60 minutes per day for weight management and 90 minutes per day for weight loss. Obviously, for the overweight 90 minutes is a daunting challenge for those who have been sedentary or are dealing with weight issues. Once in condition, I would recommend 60-90 minutes per day if you are really serious.



What exactly is low-impact cardiovascular training? It simply is any form of exercise that raises the heart rate without putting extreme stress on joints and connective tissues. Here are some basic examples of low-impact training:

- 1) speed walking
- 2) power walking (light dumbbells)
- 3) hiking
- 4) biking
- 5) treadmill
- 6) stairmaster
- 7) swimming
- 8) cross country skiing
- 9) elliptical machine



We must remember, for most, the increase to this level or activity should be a gradual process. For the first month do 30 minutes per day at you own pace. Month two, increase intensity and duration by

maybe 15 minutes and every month after do the same until 90 minutes is no longer an impossible mountain to climb. Also, this type of training does not have to be done all at once. Most of us lead busy lives, so breaking up daily cardiovascular requirements into increments is not only expected, but encouraged.

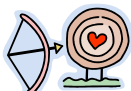


I know; why is this so important and why should one want to do it? The Center of Disease Control (CDC) has research that validates how proper diet and exercise can prevent most chronic illness. My experience has been in seeing how people manage illness like diabetics and in my rare case even reverse disease. Here are some of the benefits of low-impact cardiovascular training that for me make it a “no brainer.”

- 1) Loss of body fat
- 2) Relief of stress
- 3) Reduction of insulin levels
- 4) Reduction of blood lactate
- 5) Increase of heart stroke volume
- 6) Lowering heart rate
- 7) Increase VO2 Max
- 8) Stimulate endorphins (natural high)



What kind of intensity level should one maintain? Two factors are important for both fitness and safety. The first is target heart rate, which can be established by first finding maximum heart rate. The simplest way to find max heart rate, is to subtract you age from 220. That means if you are 50 years old, your max heart rate should be 170 beats per minute. Take your max heart rate and train in



a 70%-85% range of that max parameter. If you are breathing heavy during exercise, decrease intensity level to one where you are not in oxygen debt. Gradually increase intensity and in time your breathing will be able to handle greater work loads. Remember, machines like treadmills are a good way to calibrate intensity and work loads. Using elevation as opposed to speed can also burn calories with less jarring stress on joints.



I look forward to speed walking at the mall and hiking with my dogs in the woods as much as anything I do during my entire day. I find it a great stress relief and an invigorating work-out. I highly encourage anyone who starts a low impact program again to find a form that they can make enjoyable. In that light, you will look forward to doing it. Changing and doing different routines can alleviate boredom and present challenge. When approaching health and fitness, we must look at the three sides of the triangle. Resistance training, sound dietary lifestyle and cardiovascular training make up the complete triangle. It is the synergy of the three where one realizes their full potential toward better fitness and health. Good luck with your cardio training and make it something fun!



My comments are based on personal experiences. I am not a licensed dietician or physician and do not speak for Head Start or any other organization. Any specific comments or questions about what may be beneficial for any individual should be directed to a physician, nurse or licensed dietician.

